

Bedford Alumni Association still working hard to pay off stadium debt



The Bedford Alumni Association is looking at many ways to raise the needed funds to pay off the original one million dollar loan for the Bedford Community Stadium. The debt has been reduced to approximately \$280,000, but fund raising has been difficult in recent years.

By Melissa Burden
Reporter

It may seem hard to believe for some, but the Bedford Community Stadium still has room for improvement and is still in debt.

Built in 1997 with a \$1 million privately funded loan, the stadium has hosted many high profile events including Bedford High School football games, the Bedford fireworks and the Bedford Relay for Life.

The stadium, the crown jewel of the Bedford School System, is still in need of a little tweaking, said Gene Stock, vice president of the alumni association.

"Because of funding, the stadium was designed and built in stages," Stock said. "We are hoping to pay off the original debt and would like to build permanent restrooms and possibly locker rooms so the teams do not have to go into the school during half-time."

Original debt? Yep, you heard it right. Contrary to what many

believe, the association currently owes \$280,000 on the original \$1million loan.

"I can't tell you how many times people tell me that they thought the stadium was paid off," Stock said. "I have been with this project since the beginning. That is 13 years and I plan to see it through. The alumni association made a commitment to this community and we are going to fulfill our commitment."

Stock said that although brick sales are still going on, it is sporadic.

"Because of the economy, the major donations have pretty well dried up also," Stock said. "There is only so much money out there and many people think it has been paid off."

Stock said that the association is looking into the possibility of holding musical concerts in the stadium as well as allowing some advertising signage to help raise funds.

"The biggest thing is the stadium can be used by everyone," he said. "It is one of the few stadiums that can be used all year round. I see people walking the track throughout the year. We would like to see it used for more things as well. We are going to look at advertising opportunities as well. We don't want to junk the stadium up and we want to keep the integrity of the stadium."

Naming rights to the stadium are also still available if a company comes up with a major donation, Stock added.

Alumni President Chuck Faller, said the association is looking at many ways to raise the needed funds to pay the loan off.

"The stadium debt began at one million dollars, and over the years we have reduced that debt to approximately \$280,000. It has been difficult in recent years for many reasons," Faller said. "First, the excitement that the project originally created is

gone. We have been using the stadium for over 10 years and people are probably taking it for granted that it is paid for."

Faller also pointed to the economy as a huge issue.

"The economy has taken its toll on our fundraising. It is simply much more difficult to raise money now than it has been in the past," Faller said. "Corporations that have donated in the past have had to tighten their belts. Individuals and families that used to be regular annual contributors have had to do the same."

The fact that many organizations are all trying to raise funds has also added to the alumni association's difficulty in trying to garner donations for the stadium, Faller said.

"Groups from all over Bedford are all trying to raise funds for their projects, programs, or charities and we are all competing for the same dollars," Faller explained. "No

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Still working hard ... Alumni President Chuck Faller and Gene Stock, vice president, continue to brain storm to come up with new ideas to help pay off the Bedford Community Stadium debt. Anyone interested in getting involved with the association to help raise these funds is greatly encouraged to do so.

one means for it to be a competition, all of the causes are worthwhile and there are good people involved with them all. It just leaves us in a difficult position because our project was the largest and we have been beating the same drum for a very long time."

Even though fundraising has been difficult, the alumni association has not thrown in the towel, Faller said.

"We have not given up, we haven't stopped trying, and we have no intentions of doing so," he said. "We continue to sell stadium bricks, solicit donations, and we continue to try and find new ways of generating revenue. We are contemplating everything from a concert at the stadium, a spaghetti dinner fundraiser with a nationally known speaker to a community garage sale."

One of the new ways the association is raising funds is through a "Community Rewards Card Program."

Marge and Norb Abel, owners of the Schoolhouse Lunch-

room, in Lambertville, have generously offered to donate 10 percent of a customer's bill to the alumni association every time a person uses one of the special "rewards" cards being issued at the Schoolhouse Lunchroom. There is no cost for the card and the card can be lent to family and friends to use it as well. The more the card is used, the more the alumni association will benefit.

The alumni association will also be holding four Charity Poker Events at the new Players Poker Room, located in the Bedford Plaza (next to Mancino's Pizza & Grinders) at 7200 Lewis Ave., in Temperance.

The charity poker events start at 2 p.m. and end at 2 a.m. each day. The dates are: Nov. 6-9; Nov. 18-21; Dec. 9-12; and Dec. 17-20.

Other ways to help include purchasing a brick for the "Pathway of Pride." For each \$100 donation, a 4" x 8" brick can be inscribed. A larger 8" x 8" brick can be purchased for \$200.

Your name or that of a student, teacher, coach, administrator, team, business, class or club can be engraved on a brick. Memorial bricks are also available.

Community members and businesses may also choose to join the Million Dollar Club, Touchdown Club or the Champions Club. Donations may be spread out over a five-year period and all donations are eligible for a 50 percent tax credit. Also known as the Community Foundation Credit, credits of up to \$100 for a single filer and up to \$200 for a joint return are available.

Finally, becoming an active member of the alumni association can help. The association meets the fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Bedford High School, Room B-6. No membership fee is required and membership is open to everyone whether you are a Bedford graduate or not.

"What may be even more important is that people can get actively involved with the asso-

ciation and share a little of their time with us in working to raise these funds," Faller said. "Many hands make lighter work and with enough people involved we could do many other things to make our fundraising more fruitful. Over the years there have been people who have come and gone as far as working in our association goes. There are about eight of us who have "stood the course" so to speak, and we are getting older and unfortunately will not live forever. It would be great to have some new and younger people involved so that the organization will continue to thrive long after those of us who are involved are gone."

For more information or to make a donation go to www.bedfordk12.mi.us or www.bedfordyes.com and follow the links to the alumni association page. You may also contact Chuck Faller at: chuckfaller@buckeye-express.com, or Gene Stock at stocksportsinc@yahoo.com.